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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problems of sex discrimination and sex stereotypes faced by women in education and employment. Several models which are used to explain the current social and cultural status of women are examined and criticized. They include: (1) the biopsychological explanatory model; (2) the psychosocial explanatory model; and (3) the psycho- and socio-cultural explanatory model. Theories concerning the psychological development of women are also critically analyzed. It is argued that these models and theories perpetuate sex discrimination against women in education and employment and that specific action by the government is necessary to provide equal opportunities to women. The issue is further addressed within the context of cultural change and educational policy. Suggestions are made for improving the opportunities available to women. Specific policies that should be considered by the government in order to provide these opportunities are outlined. (EB)

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EDUCATION AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

S T U D Y

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PART I : WOMEN, EDUCATION AND CULTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

American economics manuals - publications which are not wont to be characterised by foolhardy, ideological premises - are currently devoting much attention to socio-economic discrimination on various grounds, including sex. The female half of the population, together with coloureds, immigrants, old people and the physically handicapped, are economically exploited and socially discriminated against purely on the grounds of physical attributes, in this case their sex characteristics. Despite gradual improvements in legislation, very many women still receive considerably less pay for work than people (white) with male attributes for similar work. Their career opportunities are extremely limited ; they are often barred from professions carrying a high status and within certain occupational groups (civil servants, teachers and politicians), the higher the position in the hierarchy, the greater the under-representation of women.

That discrimination against women in socio-economic life ranges from the intentional to the semi-conscious or unconscious is a hard and much documented fact. Authoritative economists now even go so far as to claim that discrimination against the female half of humanity is not only unethical but has a demonstrably detrimental effect on a society's level of prosperity.

The dogged persistence of discrimination against women despite sound, detailed documentation and analysis of the phenomenon and despite even the "hard" adverse economic effect is clear evidence of the irrational sources from which sex discrimination springs and is fed.

Rationally speaking, practically everyone today believes that discrimination against others, particularly on the grounds of something as irrelevant as physical features (ie. sex) is wrong.

Rationally speaking, everyone would prefer to see the largest possible economic returns from the efforts of the working population as a whole.

Rationally speaking, the majority of people think that men and women, despite any differences they may display as groups, are equal and should be permitted to make an equal contribution to social, political and cultural life. In practice, however, the situation is very different.

Socio-economic discrimination against women in the working world can partly be explained by the lower number of women and girls in secondary school, in higher education and in occupational and vocational courses. Even if no obstacles were placed in the way of qualified women pursuing a career (regrettably not the case because of the overwhelmingly male predominance in the senior posts of both the civil service and industry, even in the most developed western countries) there would be relatively few women with the right training for certain demanding occupations. The higher the value placed on general or vocational education, the fewer women there will be in it. Apart, therefore, from the scope for improvement in civil service and industrial practice, we must ascertain why it is that girls and women make little or no use of the formal educational opportunities available to them, and what can be done to improve the situation.

Since sexual discrimination in education has been legally abolished in practically all civilised countries, and women formally have the same educational opportunities as men, we should be mindful of factors that are perhaps not immediately evident or that relate to behavioural impulses on the part of men and women of which they themselves are not always aware. However this may be, it is plain that although women frequently neglect their first educational opportunities, they are the very ones who display the greatest need for refresher courses, second-chance education, adult education and permanent education. The success achieved with the courses recently organised for adults during the day, the open school and the open university, particularly among women, is proof of this.

2. EXPLANATORY MODELS

To a certain extent one can take one's pick of explanatory models elucidating why women are educationally disadvantaged (and why women are under-represented in public life and in higher positions, which is to some degree a corollary). One could adopt the naive and uncritical view that when it comes to intellectual matters, making a career, leadership qualities, creativity and enterprise, males are simply <u>better</u> than females. After all, history and some tests confirm this!

This explanatory model satisfies male narcissism (which many women seem to have internalised ; among women, as in all groups which are discriminated against, there is a great deal of self-contempt and self-hatred and identification with the privileged caste). The model also confirms the status quo and in this sense assuages "human" fear of radical social and cultural change. The conclusion drawn from this is that from the ethical and rational points of view it would naturally be better if all people had equal chances etc. ; on the other hand, however, women happen to be different and they themselves do not want to participate fully in public life, as is clear from the choices they make and their drop-out rate in education.

More critical minds, however, tend to judge what history reveals and the usual criteria of intelligence, ambition and leadership potential on their merits. Psychology and sociology have become such common cultural property that any educated layman knows that apparently free choices are not always as free as they seem. If boys with a given IQ tend as a group to select courses which fit their capacities or which stretch them while girls with the same IQ are more likely not to develop their full potential and select courses at too low a level, or drop out before qualifying, or do work below their trained capacities, there must be more to it than a "free choice".

If women as a group in western countries are not attracted to medical and advanced technical courses while the professions of engineer and doctor have been typically female ones in the Soviet Union for years now, then again there must be more to it than free choice. Perhaps there are <u>historical</u> reasons for the age-old under-representation and discrimination against women in public life. Perhaps there are cultural reasons for the lower scores of women in some tests (assuming that the tests in question are not sex-biased in advance). If half of mankind seems to be "different" perhaps public life ought to be arranged according to yardsticks other than the current ones which give every indication of functioning exclusively for the benefit and at the behest of men.

Analysed from the biopsychological, psychological, socio-economic and cultural angles, the ostensibly free "negative" choices of girls and women in the current system, which in the main endow them with formal and legal equality in education, could prove to be less free than would appear at first glance.

3. THE BIOPSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATORY MODEL

Anatomical differences between men and women, in conjunction with certain physiological differences, could explain the division of labour between men and women which has evolved in the course of the ages.

It was important for the evolution of mankind that the female body was equipped first and foremost to bear, feed and care for children, while the male body was designed for activities entailing strength and speed. Women were responsible for the procreation of the species and for tilling the soil - men went out hunting, defended the tribe and its territory and expanded the latter if need be.

This being the case, during the primitive stages of our culture it was functional for men as a group to be more extroverted (oriented to the outside world), to display more aggressive impulses (aggression is a neutral, technical term here), and for women to develop the introverted caring, cherishing side of human character.

Some modern psychologists, and ethologists in particular, see sufficient explanation for the current sex roles in this evolutionary background. The significance of basic biological data, they say, is frequently underestimated in these sociology-conscious times. Within our biopsychological limits we can choose certain alternatives, but basically the biopsychological heritage of evolution determines the behaviour of each and every one of us.

Criticism : Our culture has arrived at a stage where the greater physical strength of the male half of mankind has practically no function (except in the artificial situation of sport). Mechanisation and automation have even rendered the evolution-based orientation of the male body dysfunctional. By the same token, the role of motherhood for individual women and for mankind in general has undergone drastic change. In the past, couples were forced to have five or six children to ensure that at least one would survive to care for them in their old age. Many of them had considerably more than six children and many comparatively young women died in childbirth (the dreaded puerperal fever) or because hygiene left so much to be desired. In fact, motherhood dominated practically the entire adult life of the majority of women until not so long ago.

Medical progress (the enormous reduction in infant mortality), state pension schemes and higher life expectancy - especially of women - have reduced motherhood to simply one of many dimensions of life for all western women. Birth control, moreover, is so sophisticated these days that women can choose to have no children or one or two, and can plan their pregnancies to suit themselves. More and more women voluntarily choose to have no children or just a small family so that the mother, given the increase in life expectancy, still has 25 to 30 productive years ahead of her once the children have become independent.

The marked orientation of the female body towards motherhood which was so functional in the evolutionary process, along with all the concomitant biopsychological consequences, is at risk of becoming dysfunctional as a result of the cultural development of mankind which has enabled women to free themselves from the dual bondage of nature and their own "nature".

Just as there may be a dichotomy for men between the evolutionary, "typically male" characteristics of aggression and physical strength and the actual circumstances of daily life, for women, too, there is a contradiction between their biopsychological features and the social and cultural opportunities and ambitions now open to the female sex.

The psychologists and ethologists who stress differences between the sexes, some of them marginal (obviously many individuals fall into both categories, but as a group each sex is differently predisposed), overlook a number of points :

a. Man is par excellence a being who manipulates his or her natural surroundings (including his or her evolutionary heritage). Man is gifted with a soul and mind ; in principle men and women can make of themselves anything they choose.

b. A biopsychological heritage which in the distant past had an evolutionary function may become extremely dysfunctional in our highly unnatural modern society and require guided realignment.

c. Socio-economic and cultural discrimination against women (an incontrovertible fact) cannot simply be explained by the different biological bent of men and women. The fact that one half of humanity has a different biopsychological function as a group from the other half is no reason for it to be oppressed, exploited and excluded from the nerve centres of society. The fact that the female sex has frequently been forced to do the heaviest, dirtiest and most dangerous work (see Sullerot (*)) further proves that the historical division of labour by sex has long since moved away from its biological basis and that very different motives have taken its place. (Women today, as a group, are allocated the lowest paid jobs with the fewest prospects.)

d. Even if particular groups are different by virtue of their biopsychological bent, there will still be considerable variation within the groups. (Incidentally, many researchers are of the opinion that there are greater differences between members of the same sex than between the two sexes.)

One cannot and may not assume that individuals will behave in a certain way because they are members of a group which normally displays certain characteristics.

(*) Evelyne Sullerot : 'Histoire et sociologie du travail féminin'.

4. THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPLANATORY MODEL

Some psychologists and social psychologists seek an explanation for the current social and cultural position of women in their "typically female" bent, which they may or may not attribute to evolutionary differences and predispositions. They maintain that women as a group are more verbally gifted than men, but display less space perception and technical insight. Women are supposed to be less aggressive and less inclined to create and become part of hierarchical social systems, to be conservative rather than innovative, more introverted as a group and oriented more to cooperation than to competition.

These and other character traits serve to make women as a group less adapted to contemporary public, socio-economic, legal, political and even cultural life. When all is said and done, our society is structured for and by men, no matter what the biological, cultural or economic reasons may be. The opportunities, customs, standards, values and objectives of public life, whether one likes it or not, are predominantly products of male capacities, mentality and ideals and are geared to the male nature and potential.

In the "male world" in which we all perforce must live women inevitably labour under a handicap. The fact that they ~~are usually valued~~ less than men (both in actual financial terms and in more subtle social and cultural ways) may perhaps be open to criticism on ethical grounds, but given the above it is quite understandable.

If we object to the current discrimination against the female half of the human race, we shall either have to proceed to "positive discrimination" in the sense of giving women extra opportunities to adjust to the male world, or we shall have to spark off a radical cultural revolution entailing the gradual demasculinisation of society to produce a structure more in accordance with the bent and ambitions of <u>both</u> sexes.

<u>Criticism</u> : It is practically impossible to establish whether the different "psychologies" of the sexes is a question of inherent qualities ; to determine what is nature and what is nurture. Margaret Mead has shown (*) that all societies have their own specific sex roles and that practically all societies discriminate against women, but the substance of what is considered to be typically female or male behaviour varies considerably from culture to culture.

It is by no means unlikely that what we in our western culture regard as typically female characteristics are to a large extent the product of that culture ; cultural artefacts which would disappear if there were no sex discrimination.

In view of the fact that we cannot establish what "true" female characteristics are (the majority of the premises and ideas heard about women are stereotypes : male projections and masculine prejudice) even with the best will in the world it is not entirely clear how we should set about feminising society, attuning it more closely to female nature.

Even if we could determine these things, the objection raised above still holds ; we cannot lump all women together on the grounds of characteristics which their sex as a group perhaps displays.

(*) Margaret Mead : 'Male and Female'.

5. THE PSYCHO- AND SOCIO-CULTURAL EXPLANATORY MODEL

The most usual, popular, and "saleable" explanatory model of female discrimination, one which is accepted in feminist circles, is the socio-cultural one. This assumes that in a certain type of society (ie. the western one) sexual roles have been created which may once have been functional for biological or socio-economic reasons of one kind or another, but are no longer so. What we call "female" and "male" behaviour are patterns of behaviour more or less imposed by the social environment and culture, the majority of which place women at a disadvantage in the sense that they restrict the number of roles available to them and induce dependence in all aspects of life (long after girls have reached maturity), a relatively low social status and a fundamentally negative cultural image.

Women, along with other groups which are discriminated against in society and to which many women also belong, have little power. Sociologists define power in this context as the right of self-determination. The major decisions relating to women - whether or not to give them the right to vote, admittance to all forms of education, equal pay for equal work, equal career opportunities, access to administrative and political decision-making processes, legalised or subsidised birth control and/or abortion, measures promoting positive discrimination so that women can make good their historically-determined disadvantages - all these and others like them are not decisions taken by <u>women</u> for women and about women.

The fact that women display practically all the main features of a minority group in society (despite their accounting for 52% of the population ; coloureds likewise sometimes constitute a statistical majority which is discriminated against) means that as a group they display a number of features which are typical of all minorities discriminated against. The ones which are significant for our purposes are :

- a rather negative self-image resulting from their internalisation of the fundamentally negative attitude of the dominant group ;
- identification with the dominant group and the interests of that group ;
- in some cases self-hate, expressed in a feeling of being different from the other members of the group and resulting in an even greater orientation towards the dominant group ;
- feelings of uncertainty and insecurity resulting in a low level of aspiration ;
- an unconscious need to fail (<u>self-fulfilling prophecy</u> based on the negative judgement of the majority) which has become internalised in the unconscious ;
- self-perpetuation of the system for want of positive role models for women and non-discriminatory views of women.

These largely psychological attributes are regarded in this model as the result of an imposed role pattern and of discriminatory social customs and cultural judgements about women.

Criticism : This explanatory model probably comes closest to reality even if only because of its comparative subtlety and complexity. Criticism of it derives not so much from the model itself (the inextricable yet relevant interaction between biological, psychological, social and cultural factors) as from the often highly biased conclusions drawn from it. Many advocates of this model believe, for instance, that abandoning sexist customs and measures, banishing sexist language, stereotypes and prejudices relating to girls and women from text books and children's books, and bringing up children free of the traditional sex roles are not only essential but would be enough to ensure that men and women are equal partners in our society.

The danger with this model, which is otherwise very sound, is that it minimises two points :

1. The different development psychology of men and women which is probably, at least partly, attributable to biopsychological factors.
2. The irrational sources of discrimination against women which are unlikely to yield to rational measures alone.

The first point is pertinent to educational policy for women ; the second to a realistic estimate of the short and long-term effects of all policy relating to discrimination against women.

6. DIFFERENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PSYCHOLOGY

Anyone who is active in secondary education or can clearly remember their own career at school or as a student will be familiar with the phenomenon of the sudden intellectual regression of girls and women roughly between the ages of sixteen and thirty. At primary school and in the initial years at secondary school girls as a group tend to produce excellent intellectual results and are more psychologically and socially mature than their male contemporaries. However, roles tend to become reversed in the later years at secondary school, at universities and in higher vocational courses. More girls leave secondary school and higher education and with greater facility than boys (see Data Report). If they stay at school they generally choose a combination of subjects, a course of study or a vocational training course which carries less prestige and which offers fewer social prospects than the corresponding male choice in the same field. The majority of women are drawn to languages and expressive subjects at school and the humanities and social sciences at university. In working life girls tend to end up in jobs, intentionally or otherwise, in which the emphasis is laid on youth (and sometimes on external appearance) ; they become sales girls, receptionists, stewardesses, secretaries, nursing auxiliaries, or end up in badly paid jobs in factories for which no skills are required and no prospects are offered.

Women's low aspirations (the tendency to choose a course which belies their ability) have often been demonstrated. It is a tendency which is reinforced by existing sexual discrimination in the social and economic field and some of the reasons for it are given below :

a. Girls receive little or no encouragement at all from their parents and those around them (including teachers) to choose the most demanding subjects or vocational courses, nor are they encouraged to complete further training at all costs.

For economic reasons alone boys are given more moral and practical support from their parents (and/or the government and private institutions by way of grants and loans) than girls, because the latter are going to get married anyway !

b. Girls and parents alike rightly have the impression - whether it be a conscious one or not - that a "superior" education and higher social status, greater earning capacity and potential independence it generally carries, work to the detriment of girls' opportunities on the marriage market. Whatever the reason may be, the majority of men are still wary of women who socially and economically are as capable or more capable than themselves.

In view of the fact that, in many circles at least, a "good" marriage is still seen as a woman's best means of acquiring the highest status and security (the continuing increase in the percentage of divorces has not yet completely dawned on the majority of people or, like accidents, they are thought only to happen to other people), there is a tendency for women to take short and, above all, easy courses in the ten years in which they can roughly be said to have their best chances on the marriage market and an inclination to choose courses which do not run counter to the traditional stereotyped image of the ideal woman to marry.

NB. It is obvious that the explanations given under (a) and (b) reinforce each other and constitute a self-fulfilling prophecy : if women en masse opt for the traditional (ie. the more or less socially inept and economically dependent) role the feminine stereotype will be continually bolstered.

c. Men and women, almost without exception, experience a different psychological and social development. The phases of life and the planning of the sequence for men and women vary enormously from puberty to old age, whether this be as a result of social and cultural stereotypes and sex discrimination of the difference in the biopsychological make-up of the sexes, which in fact these days has become dysfunctional.

In the early years of childhood and in old age the major differences stem from individual personalities rather than the sex characteristics of each group. However, in puberty, adolescence, young adulthood and middle-age development differs according to sex as well.

It is a well-known fact that men who are exceptionally gifted in the exact sciences or technical subjects often reach the peak of their productivity and creativity prior to the age of thirty. For mathematics the peak even comes in the early twenties. But when it comes to less exceptional gifts, men as a rule reach their peak in terms of activity and productivity prior to their thirty-fifth year. The basis of a career is laid around this age ; the extreme peaks which occur subsequent to this up to around the forty-fifth year are often no more than a reward - with a certain time lag - for the achievements and qualities displayed in early adulthood. Men who have not really accomplished anything during the busy work phase because of illness, laziness, or inability, usually fail in any later attempt to restore their careers too.

It is precisely during the phase when young men are "earning their spurs", showing "what they are worth" and investing inordinate quantities of energy in studying and work, that women, judged by masculine working standards, are "at their worst"

It is a fact that women are often totally preoccupied with finding a husband, having and caring for young children (which consumes an enormous amount of time and energy), looking after the common household, (work which is far from equally divided between the sexes), and often doing work to support husbands in their careers during the very phase which is so decisive for men's education and careers (Margaret Mead several decades ago said : "What a woman needs is a housewife").

Women who are still unmarried or still have no children, nevertheless often display the behavioural pattern which is associated with young motherhood : they prematurely finish their courses, or consider them as an incidental activity ; they are not so exclusively achievement-oriented at work ; they are not as energetic, intellectually creative or one-track-minded as young men of the same age. It is not until the stage when men can allow themselves to let go of the reins for the first time, when they become somewhat more human in the sense of being more introspective and less competitive, that the reverse happens to women :

1. the children of women above the age of thirty-five to forty are usually beyond the toddler-stage or the women no longer have any fresh ambitions on the family front ;
2. between their thirtieth and fortieth year they gradually tend to wake up again intellectually as it were, and at the same time become more interested in social matters, more open than ever before, free to display their ambitions and to develop their talents.

I should like to repeat that quite apart from the academic question as to the cause of the differential development of men and women (the cause may be something as specific as the relative testosterone content or oestrogen content or something as difficult to quantify as sex role stereotypes or a conscious or unconscious social and economic "maximisation" of profits), the fact remains that women as a group become really involved in the world outside the family or would like to do so both intellectually and in terms of their aspirations - and this at the very point at which in principle the race is over for the male half of the population for whom and by whom society is organised.

This means that if the governments see women's participation in social, economic and cultural life quite rightly as a priority, more is needed than the formal opportunity of lifelong learning. Much more radical modifications will have to be made to the labour ethos and current career planning if education and vocational training is to have any social benefit for the many women who eagerly seek it at a later age.

Take the formal, educational picture at progressive American universities : from the age of forty onwards women start attending American universities in relatively large numbers because the facilities (credit-points system, open subject choice, evening classes, week-end classes, holiday courses often in combination with media-teaching) are ideally suited to the needs of older women. Degrees can be obtained, if necessary, with long interruptions during the course.

Having finished their courses when they are middle-aged, women are in for a big disappointment : their opportunities on the labour market have shrunk more than ever in the meantime.

The concrete tasks demanding government action here are obvious : the combating of the contemptible practice of discrimination on the basis of physical characteristics (sex) should be linked with efforts to abolish discrimination on the grounds of age. Women in particular will benefit from the fight to eliminate "agism" in view of the normal pattern of their lives, their career, studying, work and ambitions.

7. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS FOR POLICY

Education is only one of the sectors in which government policy designed to foster the optimal development of men and women will have to be active. Policy in one sector alone and at one level will always prove to be inadequate because the social and economic situation of women, the specific way they develop and the culturally stereotyped image of what is male and what is female (many women believe what prejudiced males think of them) are interwoven in such a complex way. We need only point to the meagre results of suffragette feminism or the feminism which concentrates exclusively on other formal rights (for example, educational rights).

The following points in particular will require attention if we want to try to help women, specifically from the educational angle, besides improving the formal aspects (equal access for boys and girls to all branches of education, equal opportunities for grants etc.).

1. Removal of sexist use of language and content of text books and lessons so that sex prejudice and stereotypes are not transferred to the next generation at a very early age.

2. More male teachers at primary schools and more female teachers in top posts and managerial positions in education may help to counteract roles being rigidly tied to sex.

3. It would be sensible to make a very definite allowance for the typical female and male patterns of development in the structure of education as a whole since they are far from symmetrical. All the facilities deriving from the principle of lifelong learning may be important, above all for women. But lifelong learning will still be no more than a means of catching up on what, for the rest, is a rigid masculine society, functioning according to strict patriarchal norms, unless adults and middle-aged students, upon completion of their studies, find an opening, thus counteracting the customary discrimination on the grounds of age.

4. Scientifically speaking, the discussion as to how men and women as groups precisely differ biologically, psychologically, socially and culturally has not been brought to any conclusion. However, one cannot use the possibility that there is a difference between the sexes as groups as an excuse for perpetuating the present one-sided masculine pattern which society as a whole is forced to follow. Removing the masculine bias in society and culture means : greater diversity, more opportunities for individual development and greater variety in the scope for planning learning and planning one's work and study. Any men who are unhappy with present rigid sex stereotypes can benefit from this as well.

5. It is crucial that the one-sided emphasis on rationalism, abstraction, exact subjects at school be removed and that an attempt be made to allow pupils to develop in an integrated way, as occurs to some extent in Montessori schools, Waldorf schools and Kees Boeke schools etc. Equally, we must not fall into the trap of classifying expressive subjects or less-rational subjects in general as "more feminine". It is imperative for everyone that they develop as many aspects of their personality as possible.

If the present form in which mathematics and science are taught at school is less suited to women as a group, either the presentation will have to be changed or it will have to be provided at a different stage in their careers. In principle, however, the exact sciences should be as open to women as the expressive ones are to men. What has to disappear is over-importance attached to the rational consciousness at the expense of other aspects of human potential and, above all, the identification of rational with male.

PART II : A POLICY FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN

8. THE PROBLEM

8.1. Crossroads

Towards the end of the Seventies we are nearing the crossroads where several trends which became established a decade ago intersect.

We have lost the optimistic view of the Sixties that "more of the same" education would benefit all social groups equally ; that the rising proportion of national income which we were spending on education would automatically bring us a qualitative growth ; that our expenditure would be of direct benefit to economy and society as well.

We are confronted currently with a stagnating economy. Most West European countries are struggling with a rate of unemployment which has been unknown since World War II and which may well have structural aspects. Evidently, there are limits to growth. And on top of this some countries (and how many will follow?) show a staggering drop in birth rates, which will affect educational policy first of all.

It is ten years now since Mr. Olof Palme at the Sixth Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education drew our attention to the fact that the process of the ever-lengthening period of youth-education could not go on endlessly. As an alternative to that he launched the concept of "recurrent education", which states that educational opportunities should be spread out over the individual's lifetime, according to his/her needs and the needs of the society in which he/she lives. This concept has raised widespread discussion during the Seventies and it may be said that it has gained ground since it is accepted by several countries as a guiding principle for adult policy. But implementation lags behind.

We have lived and learned during the Seventies. This decade witnessed the great comprehensive theories about learning. The concept of education was broadened from cognitive, intellectual abilities to personality-development and consciousness-raising. The dimension of lifelong learning was added ; there was a reappraisal of experience, of living and being, a growing interest in non-hierarchical ways of learning, and the goals of education were re-directed from the working world to a more general participation in society. Even the educational system itself was challenged with ideas of "de-schooling".

It looks as if we are now entering a period of stabilisation, a period in which we can no longer expect to open new ways and means alongside the old ones. If there are limits to growth it means that we will have to plan, set priorities and make choices between the different ways open to us. It means that our attention should go in the first place to reshuffling the cards we already have in our hands, to re-directing the developments that are already on their way, to the re-allocation of educational funds while shifting our goals. The declining birth rate, seen by some as a severe threat to settled educational interests, may well give us opportunities for a new educational policy which our stabilising economy cannot. The problems of unemployment may force us to revaluate the relation between living, learning and working, when the existing institutions cannot.

This is the scene where the demand for equal opportunities for women and girls comes into view. Is the moment well chosen now that the labour market is closing down, the army of labour demobilising, funds are scarce and even men cannot improve their prospects with education ? If the demand for equal opportunity for women and girls is understood as a demand for "more of the same" the moment is surely badly chosen. But if we are prepared to travel with the tide there may be possibilities. It is my opinion that many of the new developments mentioned here could be turned to the benefit of women, if certain conditions can be fulfilled. Other, seemingly similar, developments will not, even to the point of cutting off their opportunities for several years to come.

It is my intention to go more deeply into this problem in the later chapters. But let us first have a look at the available date and see if there is a problem.

8.2. In search of data

Education has played an important role in social change since the Second World War and its contribution to female emancipation cannot be underestimated. Education and emancipation are in essence closely related : once conferred, once possessed, it cannot be taken away : they are both an irreversible process of growth. The increased participation of women in education has undoubtedly been one of the factors behind the "second emancipation wave" of the Sixties. Women in Western Europe currently receive more education than their mothers and grandmothers did. But given the quantitative increase in the educational participation of women they still lag relatively behind the men. We knew that this was the case. But did we know the extent of the problem ?

"What is not counted is usually not noticed" Galbraith has said with regard to female emancipation (*). The difficulties experienced by the contributors to the Data Report prepared for this Session in collecting internationally comparable statistics are indicative of the degree to which the problem of unequal educational opportunities for women is underestimated. For the reverse of Galbraith's phrase is also valid : "What is not noticed is usually not counted". There needs to be a problem-consciousness as such before steps are taken to measure its contours. The problems associated with the collection of data are a reflection of the phase in which thinking about equal opportunities finds itself.

One gets the impression that interest in the problem of unequal opportunities for women is growing quickly. There are many examples of experiments undertaken in recent years in a number of member States. Reports are available at the national level which are of significance for the European level. In various international organisations great efforts are being made to collect and analyse data. Perhaps one of the factors in the increased interest is that labour market specialists have recognised the problem of equal opportunities for women sooner and have been quicker in looking at the policy implications. There is much information available about the participation of women in the labour market and the influences upon it which are of importance for equal opportunity in the educational system. The problems for educational policy which have arisen in the labour market include school leavers and youth unemployment, vocational guidance of women and girls, training and re-training of women who wish to return to work.

(*) Galbraith : "The economies of the American house-wife".

We know now that inside the labour market women do not have equal opportunity. One of the alleged reasons is that their educational level is lower. But why is this ? Will educational experts now tell us that women have a lower motivation because they know they have no chances in the labour market for the higher, well-paid jobs ? So why should they learn ? Or is it a question of the preferences of girls themselves, free choice and not a problem of unequal chances at all ? To answer these questions a more detailed analysis of the educational participation of women is necessary.

8.3. Where are women in the educational system ?

It is a handicap that statistics on educational participation are often not differentiated in terms of sex. The very global statistics which are available tell us things about the educational participation of girls in general, but for a valid analysis more exact and comparable statistics are necessary. For instance, the formal educational level of girls tells us little if we do not know which subjects are chosen by boys and girls and the further education or jobs to which the subjects lead. Statistics about participation in vocational training are only meaningful if we know which training courses are involved, the participation of boys and girls in the different courses, and to what type of jobs such training leads.

It is not possible to make an exact analysis on the basis of the available data. We can make some good guesses, however, on the basis of the available figures, in combination with some national research studies (1) and EEC research (1).

The general picture of educational participation by women is then characterised by a lower participation rate for women. The higher the educational level involved, the lower the participation rate of women. But that does not tell us everything. The subject choices open to girls are often so determined that they are an inadequate basis for their later functions in society, outside marriage and the household. Further education in the present or at a later date is often rendered impossible by the subject choices made by girls in the earlier stages of their education. The subject choices made compel girls in the direction of the lower qualified jobs in what are regarded as typically female occupations. A large percentage of girls leave education with general qualifications and without a good occupational preparation. Women are significantly underrepresented in that part of the educational system which leads to post-secondary and tertiary education and the occupations with higher social status.

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(1) eg. Samson, M. : Free Choice - Theory and Reality, Swedish National Board of Education, 1975

Careers Education in Secondary Schools, Vol. 18 1973, Department of Education and Science (UK)

Thomas H. and A. Albrecht-Heide : Schools and Professional Inequality of Women in the European Community, Berlin 1977

Byrne, Dr. Eileen M. : Equality of Education and Training for Girls in the second level of education, EEC 1978

8.4. A form of intragenerational inequality

These differences cannot be explained away in terms either of aptitude or of personal preference (1). We should readily lose our way in the search for an explanatory hypothesis were it not that the distribution of women in the educational system shows striking similarities with other well-studied forms of unequal opportunities, i.e. the inequalities between social groups or classes.

The underrepresentation of women in those parts of the educational system which offer the greatest social perspectives seems to suggest the presence of intragenerational educational inequality. Disparities in educational participation and achievement of the kind reported by the Kohnstamm Institute show many similarities with the unequal distribution of social groups and classes in the educational system. They are most apparent in those countries with differentiated systems of secondary education.

"But in those member countries that have maintained parallel types of secondary schools, a more subtle type of social selection can be observed, consisting of unequal distribution over the several parallel secondary tracks and/or programmes, with heavy bias for the upper and middle social strata toward the curriculum that assure eligibility for post-secondary programmes." (2).

The Data Report presents detailed support for the supposition that, as is the case of certain social classes, women are subjected to "a subtle social selection" in which society assigns them a role and treats them accordingly. Women more or less consciously accept that role, and the expectations of society take the form of a self-fulfilling prophesy. As with social classes we are faced with "inherited attitudes, lack of motivation, and indeed of prejudice (2), which reinforce the relationships and are associated with value and norm systems which are applied in regard to the group and also within the group. In fact, the way women are placed within the system bears a strong resemblance to the way social groups of a low status and minorities are distributed in the system.

It is striking that educational theory has shown little interest in this form of intragenerational inequality, although it has for many decades been deeply concerned with the problem of social inequality. But having recognised that the disparities of educational participation and achievement for women share many similarities with the well-documented forms of social inequality between groups and classes, we still need to ask whether the inequality of women and girls in education possesses special characteristics which could be important in promoting their equal chances. I regard this as being the situation, but it is first necessary to say more about the changing positions of women and men in general.

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(1) Dessaur, Part I, section 2 of this Study.

(2) Kallen, Bengtsson, a.o. : "Recurrent Education".

9. CULTURAL CHANGES AND STEREOTYPES

9.1. Three aspects

Our changing world has until recently been a divided world - a dichotomised world - in which different behaviour and different preferences were expected from the sexes. Certain domains in life were women's domains, certain activities were men's jobs, certain values were labelled as typically feminine or masculine. These former truths are shifting. It can now be said that the changing positions of women and men can be characterised by three mutually related aspects :

a. the relinquishing of stereotypes about "male" and "female" ;

b. integration of values and insights which have been associated with the "feminine way of life" ;

c. closing the gap formed by disparities between women and men, where certain activities, domains of life, values and insights have been attributed to one of the sexes.

a. The stereotypes

It is now an accepted idea to view the differences between men and women in our society in the light of changing roles. This approach is in itself just, but carries the danger that the emphasis is placed upon the normative, idealistic aspects, ie. the changing mentality and role definitions. Since we have given up the belief that these roles originate in heaven, they are sometimes discussed as if they came out of the blue. However, they have a basis in facts of social and economic nature, too, which are in our times the subject of rapid and radical change. There exists a complex interaction between changes of an institutional character and changing cultural values. Often they reinforce each other, but the possibility of conflict is not excluded since they can change independently of one another. One might think of the relation between the desired participation of women in the labour market and the value attributed to motherhood.

In the following we will highlight some of these facts which should be considered of great importance for the changing roles of men and women, and the educational needs they have throughout life. Let us point out here that stereotyped role-expectations can be very restricting for the individual as such. And one thing we may well be certain of is that differences among women and among men are as great as the differences between women and men as a group.

In terms of personal development and the educational objective of allowing the individual to develop personal aptitudes to the full, we do injustice to both women and men by shaping their development according to the stereotype of male and female instead of as individuals.

But there is more to the stereotype than restrictive role-definitions. On the basis of stereotypes of male and female we made our world a two-faced, two-sexed world in which certain spheres of life, certain domains are allocated to the female sex (home, family, children, caring for other people) and other spheres to the male sex (the hard outer world of paid labour, economy, politics etc.). It is the stereotype of the masculine part of life, the masculine norms and values, masculine needs too, that we have institutionalised in society, in the labour market, in education - and this masculine stereotype cannot exist without its female counterpart.

So when we are relinquishing female stereotypes something is bound to happen to the masculine stereotype too - and more indirectly to the social institutions which are based on these stereotyped views of life.

b. Integration of feminine values

Parallel to these developments we see a cultural change which is generally not recognised as an emancipatory development. It involves the value attributed to emotions, personal relations, experience of life, artistic skills and creativity, non-competitiveness in relationships, the value of teamwork, and learning as a group-directed process. We can recognise here the line of thinking in what we called "comprehensive theories" of learning in section 8. Comprehensive refers here to the integration of different values and attitudes, dimensions of living and phases of life in our image of learning.

The search for new methods which emphasise the relevance of learning to the world around us, the broad view of education which includes not only schooling and training but also personal development and opportunities for participation - "globalisation", non-directive methods, self-education and open curricula, are all indications of a new system of values which we could characterise as "humanising".

c. Closing the gap

Male and female roles may be complementary, but they are not symmetrical in the sense of society attaching the same value to both. "Female" values and attitudes need upgrading before they can be integrated. The same applies to female activities, female labour, female participation in society. Women are severely underrepresented in those parts of society where knowledge and power reside. So women have to close the gap and make up their lost ground in social and political life, in the labour market and in education.

Our West European culture makes a remarkable distinction between men and women in regard to paid work. Male participation in society seems to be so obvious that adult males have a duty to work throughout their productive lives. The married woman in Western Europe is "freed" from such a duty whether she has other responsibilities or not. For the same reasons she does not count as "unemployed" when she is able and willing to work but cannot find paid work (1).

The lost ground for men is less obvious at first sight, but nevertheless very real in terms of participation in the immediate circle of family life and friendship, and in being able to care for himself and others. Men are in terms of care dependent upon a traditional type of woman who is rapidly disappearing. It is remarkable here that making up this lost ground is seen as "stepping down".

In terms of the dominant culture, the position of women in society can be characterised as a problem of disadvantage, as a minority problem or even as pure discrimination. The same applies to men within the sphere of personal life : we can think of the single man who, wishing to care for his children, experiences many more difficulties than a woman in the same position.

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(1) Most European countries do register the married woman in search of work at her request. This is, however, not the automatic process by which male unemployment is registered. Therefore a very substantial part of female unemployment remains hidden.

It is necessary to point out that the relationship between the three aspects suggested above is complex and often paradoxical. These aspects are deeply dependent and must be constantly seen in relation to each other. An over-emphasis on one aspect mostly leads to internal contradictions because justice is not done to the other aspects : the rejection of stereotypes alone can give rise to new and equally limited stereotypes such as that of a unisex society in which men and women are always and everywhere the same. The growing integration of feminine values can be so over-emphasised that women are priced out of the market and within no time are - highly valued - sitting at home again. Over-emphasis on closing the gap of disadvantage could lead to adaptation and conformity to a male norm so that all women are expected to work full-time. A policy to create equal opportunity for men and women must take account of all three aspects.

9.2. The time dimension

The clearest evidence that the positions of men and women are subject to change in our society is to be found in the ambivalence demonstrated by women, men and society in general in regard to child-rearing and household tasks. These are regarded in turn as important and unimportant work ; time-consuming or something to be done in the small hours between other things ; of economic value or worthless ; highly qualified or unqualified labour - something to be paid for or free ; part of the national product and yet not ; a "burden" alternating between employers and government or a "handicap" for women.

This problem offers perhaps the best illustration of what I previously referred to as the three aspects of the changing position of men and women. On the one hand, we are undermining the stereotype that "a woman's place is in the home" and that the upbringing of children is exclusively a task for women. On the other hand, we do not know how we should value and allocate such tasks. Finally, we believe we can improve the position of women by relieving them of the "handicap" of bringing up children and household duties. But whose handicap is it really ? Is "handicap" the right word ? It is necessary to pay closer attention to this primary source of unequal opportunities because society has little idea of how to solve it.

It seems to me that a fruitful approach is to regard time as a scarce commodity and to see how it is distributed over the lives of men and women. It is of importance to examine which part of the lives of women is consumed in upbringing and what is the real extent of household work during the day and week. And finally what are the trends in the distribution of these tasks between women, men and society.

9.3. Hard facts

In the near future a small but growing minority of European women will not marry (up to 25%). However, the greater majority of women in Western Europe marry, or will be married for at least a certain period of their lives. On average there will not be more than two children. Their own mothers, one generation ago, had on average four children. Women today marry at a younger age than their mothers did and have completed their family by the time they are thirty. "The growing similarity in reproductive behaviour in Europe, despite a great diversity in legislation and regimes, is a remarkable and so far unexplained phenomenon"(1).

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(1) Sullerot : "Changing roles".

This means for a woman in Western Europe that her youngest child is at primary school before she is 35 years old. This turns out to be a decisive moment in taking up new tasks or renewing older tasks such as going to work or studying (1).

Children leave home about four years sooner than in earlier generations. When the youngest child leaves home the woman is somewhere in her forties with twenty productive years ahead. This productive period can increase to 25 or 30 years when we start counting from the first day at school of the youngest child. These are, of course, only rough estimations. But it is surprising that national differences in fertility rates, age of marriage and life-expectancy do not alter this general picture. The consequences are great. In the first place it means that the contemporary woman will only spend a small part of her adult life in having children. Even when she accepts the most traditional consequences of childbearing, it will consume less than half of her adult life.

A second important element is that the use of family planning to determine the timing and duration of her own childbearing period is largely her own responsibility. The difference with previous generations is that this period in her life can now be calculated. Her life plan can include intentions regarding the periods before and after the period of childbearing ; and the psychological implications of this must be fundamental.

The dream of "marrying and living happily ever after" is also beginning to be the worse for wear. Divorce becomes more normal and women who have to care for their children remarry less often than men in the same position. Men become sick or unemployed ; the idea of the housebound woman becomes more exclusive : in the USA one out of five breadwinners is a woman.

Household duties are also no longer what they were. During the last century there has been a continuing transfer of family responsibilities to the collectivity. Mechanisation has eased many tasks. Other tasks have developed and spread especially with regard to consumption-planning and the increasing distances between home, work, schools and shops.

However, it remains real work. Research demonstrates that the average time spent on housekeeping in the industrial countries is around 30 hours per week (2, 3). There are variations primarily concerned with the presence of children - 10 hours per week extra for children under six. We are concerned here with the hard core of housekeeping which is approximately the same in all Western European countries.

What are the most likely trends in the distribution of these tasks between men, women and the community ? Sullerot reports a growing similarity between the roles, but it looks as if this is only a small avant-garde and is observed at the level of what people consider as desirable : the evidence (3) does not allow us to regard the actual distribution of tasks between the sexes in terms of an equal sharing of domestic tasks.

Nevertheless, the fact that women are still primarily responsible for household tasks is even now not decisive in their assumption of other tasks. When women are prepared to work at least 13 hours extra per week in order to work outside the home, there is evidence of strong motivation. Such a work load may certainly influence the form of their participation in the labour market, but does not prevent them from working.

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(1) Darling: "Creating Choices"
(2) Szalai : "The use of time"
(3) Darling: "The role of women in the economy"

That having children still strongly influences the female role is demonstrated by the M-curves - the camelbacks - which characterise the quantitative participation of women in the labour market in terms of age. These show a more or less pronounced step-out between 25 and 35 years of age along the lines of the demographic evidence suggested above.

It would be interesting to know how far changes in role patterns are of influence upon the levelling of the M-curve which is to be observed in some countries. The inflow of women onto the labour market is decidedly from the group 25 to 35 years of age, but we do not know who they are. Are they the well-educated who can afford to hire household help or benefit from flexible working hours ? What is the contribution of the part-timers, and is this reflected in the increasing part-time employment of men in the same age-group ? Do the countries with a flatter M-curve count rural domestic workers who can combine work more easily with domestic responsibilities ?

Although the availability of child-care facilities is undoubtedly crucial in creating a more "manly" participation-curve there is no evidence of a direct relation. Only a country such as Sweden has an adequate relation between the need for child-care facilities and their availability, and flatter M-curves are observable in other, mainly Scandinavian, countries.

9.4. Trends towards pluriformity

To make a guess about the most likely developments we may assume that women will only adopt the male pattern for full-time work during the whole of their adult lives when society relieves them of all responsibilities for upbringing and housework - which will be practically impossible.

The development in the direction of a society in which men and women are definitely relieved of the "burdens" of child-care and domestic tasks does not seem likely. Past developments in this direction - Eastern Europe and the Israeli Kibbutz - have retreated when the societies concerned were no longer confronted with crisis. We seem to regard a certain degree of personal responsibility for ourselves and our children as an aspect of welfare.

Another possibility is that men will take over the tasks of women and thereby lead more "feminine" lives. In how far is this a simple matter ? To what extent can European men be held responsible for the limited degree to which they have implemented their verbal agreement to the principle of equal tasks in the home ? (1)

It is here that we come up against the lack of equal opportunities for men - a combination of socialisation and a world which is not built to fit a group of men who desire change. In this context men are as much the prisoners of stereotypes as women. Our social institutions, the labour market, and the educational system are based on people who do not have additional responsibilities such as family responsibilities, irrespective of whether they are men or women. The over-emphasis upon full-time work and full-time education is associated with the image of a divided world in which some work and some learn, while others do the rest. These "others" contribute 30 hours per week at least to do this non-work as we have seen. These "others" are usually the women.

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(1) Sullerot : "Changing roles"

It is possible that the transfer of certain tasks to the collectivity will continue for some time to come. We may think of pre-school provisions, timetabling in schools, dining-out facilities, launderettes. But a hard core of tasks will remain which have to be carried out individually, by men, women or the two together.

If Sullerot is right and we are moving towards a greater similarity between the roles, it will be some variant of the two together. The traditional man with a definite career-line of full-time school - full-time work until he is pensioned off and no family responsibilities except bringing in money, will become a rarity. Moreover, this man will be dependent upon a traditional woman who will become even more scarce. It will be rare, too, that anyone in our changing society will be able to have a continuous working life of 40 years. The more stable demand for labour will entail changes of job and use of opportunities outside the labour market such as earlier retirement or educational leave, and maybe the "right to useful unemployment"(1) or "creative leave of absence" (2). We must question ourselves in how far the eight-hour working day and the 40-hour week can still be a standard for every individual, if we think about women and men - and the amount of work and non-work that is indispensable to society.

It seems that the trends one is extrapolating when thinking of the future of labour and education are derived from the masculine stereotype of life-pattern which has lost its basis in reality. It is likely that we will have to reckon with a great diversity of trends in the future. There will be differences on national and regional levels, in urban and rural areas, between social groups depending upon the stage of education they are in, their educational level and the amount of facilities offered by the collectivity. Last but not least there will be differences depending on a free choice of parents to have children and take the responsibility for their upbringing or to care for other people. So the most likely trend will be that in the near future a proportion of women - the unmarried and a growing part of the married women - will adopt a more "masculine" life-pattern. A majority of the women with young children (and a minority of the men in the same position) will need accommodating conditions of work while the children are young - or will have to withdraw from the labour market altogether, as long as the present-day standards of working day and week remain as they are. These groups will probably show proportional differences between the sexes ; but men and women cannot be treated any more as separate groups with a distinct lifestyle. We shall have to take account of pluriformity in lifestyles and lifecycles. The time to learn, to work and to live will be distributed in different ways throughout people's lives.

This means that the stereotype of the masculine life-plan can no longer be permitted to determine the form of our social institutions and especially the educational system. The latter must be shaped in terms of a more pluriform image of individual differences in the lifecycle as well as the daily or weekly time available for education and work. This means that only in the period of youth will it be possible to maintain a system of full-time education. Adults will have such diverse needs for education that only a highly flexible system will be able to do justice to them.

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(1) Illich : "The right to useful unemployment

(2) Louis Emmery : "Volledige werkgelegenheid door creatief verlof".

10. EDUCATION AND STEREOTYPES

10.1. Special characteristics of female disadvantage

We have not without reason looked in depth at the developments in the positions of men and women in Western Europe. This was necessary before being able to talk about unequal chances for women in education. Education is not independent of, but indeed closely related to the social, economic and cultural situation.This applies especially to the position of women. It seems that in our society they have the right to participate and in absolute terms have equal rights - but only when they are prepared to conform to the masculine stereotype of living, learning and working.

We know in relation to certain social groups that the gap between the world they live in and reality as they experience it on the one hand and the value-system they are confronted with in school and in society on the other hand, is the main cause of their disadvantage.

Something similar is happening to women when they are confronted from youth onward with the double-talk which society - and with it the educational system - is giving them. It is not only that a certain stereotyped behaviour is expected of them - a role often so restricting that it hampers their development - but when they comply they are given to understand that the values they stand for are less acceptable in society. And when, grown up, they have adapted to their roles, it turns out that society was made to fit the other role - that of men.

So the unequal educational opportunities of women are characterised not only by the stereotypes of attitudes and values of men and women, but by the one-sided dominance of the male stereotype in society and education. In this way we use a kind of double-talk in our educational system which especially works to the disadvantage of women. The stereotype applies to young girls especially in terms of socialisation and future expectations. These expectations become real for adult women in the tasks given to them in accordance with the existing stereotypes - which in our masculinised world turn to handicaps. These differences are evident in the various phases of the lifecycle.

10.2. Phases in learning, living and working

Girls have the advantage until the first years of primary school. They grow up in an environment which is predominantly feminine, and their socialisation stresses characteristics which determine their early successes at school. Here we treat boys a little more ambivalently . The world of adult men is closed to them and the characteristics which mark them out as little boys cannot be used in school. This double-talk leads to a number of them to drop out (1). Further on in the primary school the socialisation process begins to work to the advantage of the boys. Their environment becomes more masculine and they begin to reap the benefits of their independent behaviour which originally caused them difficulties. While socialisation in the primary school can be seen as a continuation and strengthening of socialisation in the wider society, the transfer to the secondary school marks the point at which the real options begin to manifest themselves in the choice between the parallel systems of secondary education and in the choice of subjects. In some European countries this choice, which can strongly influence later options, is taken at eleven years of age.

(1) Frazier and Sadker : "Sexism in school".

At approximately 16 years of age there appears to be a further decisive moment. This is in many countries the end of the first cycle of secondary education and usually signifies the end of compulsory schooling. It is also important in the development of the individual because at this point most children begin to see the direction of their own lives. The boys begin to develop an autonomous motivation to learn, while the girls are ambivalent. The full burden of our social double-talk begins to fall on them. There are two possible paths for them to follow. On the one hand, the path of the boys which after some years of further education and training leads to a job and even a career if they are lucky. On the other hand, a busy life is beginning around the girls characterised by sex and popularity (which apparently can also be won without serious study habits). The future there is one of marriage and having children. When one is sixteen the first path looks long and tedious and requires much concentration ; there are no illusions about combining the two paths of study and career. Children are fun, and you are at least your own boss in the home, and it can all start tomorrow. It is not surprising that girls with lower motivation in school, from lower social strata, choose the apparently most attractive path when faced with the choice of marriage or a monotonous low-status job (1).

Given the developments sketched above, girls react more in terms of the stereo-type of life-expectations than in terms of a probable future. The truth is, when she is successful with her children and her husband, that it will not last as long as she expected. Sometime in her thirties, she discovers that she has little to do in this world to give her a sense of self-confidence. At that point she has become someone with an insufficient and now out-dated education for whom there is little demand. It is not easy either to make progress with the other things one can do in our society. With a poor educational background and never having achieved any-thing - apart from the children - it is not so easy to speak your mind at a political meeting or start a social action in the neighbourhood when there is a likelihood of having to discuss with better educated men. The children learned more than their mothers did and are not impressed by the years of dedication ...

The effects of early socialisation begin to wear thin when confronted with this situation. And then the women want to go back to school, a place where every-thing seemed normal because there were boys too. Where the wrong road was taken and the fault was made. So they try to go back to school in their own time and win back their self-confidence. To get a job, to participate in society. Is there any chance ?

This process is not as difficult for the women who completed their education with a vocational training. But such training is now out-dated and often they have little occupational experience. The apprenticeship system is decidedly associated with male occupations and the strict age limits make her out to be "too old". Retraining ? But for what ? Mostly only possible for those jobs for which the labour market has need - often only temporarily (2) - and these are jobs which do nothing to raise their occupational level. They will soon be out of work again with the same problem.

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(1) Nauta and Hunt : "Fifth form girls : their hopes for the future"

(2) Darling : "Creating choices".

The entry to institutions for adult and continuing education is a problem too. Now that men are faced with comparable problems in their working life, continuing education is being taken more seriously. This entails the reduction of part-time courses for adults and the growth of longer and more intensive courses geared to vocational training and especially the masculine jobs. Continuing education is gradually becoming a provision for those who are alternating between paid work and education, and the needs of those who are alternating between non-work - such as housekeeping and child-care - and education are increasingly under pressure. For these there are those forms of adult education which do not lead to new jobs, but are expressive in their nature. The instrumental courses are dominated by men. The earlier socialisation of women strengthens this process: this division reflects exactly the subject choices open to them as girls and the opportunities they had as girls. What was then possible but difficult now begins to become definitely impossible.

10.3. Vicious circles

The vicious circle is complete. Under the influence of labour market interests the world of continuing education is now less able to fulfil the compensatory and second-chance functions for women which it was formerly gradually attaining.
A number of factors suggest that the inequality of opportunities for women and girls is developing in the direction of no opportunities at all :

- the differential development and socialisation of women ;
- the qualifications with which they leave school : only general, too low, wrong streams, curricula, subject choices ;
- the temporary stepping-out of working life and education at just the time when men are laying the foundations of their careers ;
- the increasingly declining opportunities to participate in society after the stepping-out period, which was in the traditional pattern so "valued" by society.

We must conclude that, against our intentions, we are creating a divided world in which a great majority of the women will be definitely relegated to being social drop-outs.

And how will it be with that other group of women who have the right choice of subjects, have enjoyed a vocational training, have good professional experience before having children, keep up-to-date when not working and wish to return with their full energy and concentration to purposeful social participation ?

But let us be careful now. Is this a problem of women only ? How many men continue to measure up to the masculine stereotype of occupational training, career and retirement nowadays ? How many men see themselves confronted with a working life which will be interrupted by periods of unemployment and limited attempts to retrain which only last a short time ? Can men permit themselves to share in the up-bringing of their children and household tasks even when they have a free choice? The same drawbacks apply to them as to the women - the lower the level of their original occupational training the harder the punishment for such behaviour.

And yet we are on the road to a society in which the available amount of paid labour will be limited. The obligation to work to which adult men are subjected and married women are freed from is becoming increasingly unrealistic. We are beginning to observe the normative aspects of the concept of unemployment: unemployed are those who ought to work, have no work and must not do much except wait until suitable work is available. Sometimes permission is granted to educate oneself and at other times one is subjected to compulsory retraining. The "right to useful unemployment" is pleaded nowadays : what about the world of non-work that has been traditionally the domain of women ?

These are developments which in the coming decades will require from us all the maximum of our capacities for creativity, invention and adaptability. The re-distribution of work and the re-distribution of learning opportunities throughout life will be among the problems. The revaluation of some forms of utilising free time such as child-care, housekeeping and volunteer work will be among our tasks. This will not only be important for improving the position of women : it will help to close the gap in social esteem between the employed and the unemployed to some extent.

11. EDUCATIONAL POLICY

11.1. Breaking the stereotype

These arguments may appear to fall beyond the scope of educational policy and the influence of education in other areas of social activity such as the world of work and economic developments. On the other hand, education is closely associated with the problem and its contribution to necessary changes is by no means limited. It may well be that the educational system is a key element in breaking through the existing vicious circles.

The more so, in our opinion, while the individualised approach is natural to education and not the two-faced, two-sexed approach which is the reality of this moment. It is a tough job to convince any educator that his/her way of teaching and the educational system itself are not neutral ; that the discriminatory treatment of women in outer society seeps down into education and educators. This may give us hope that once the educational system is problem-conscious adequate measures will be taken.

What these measures generally imply must be clear after all that has been said. It means that in the process of teaching both children and adults must be treated as individuals and not according to stereotyped views as girls and boys, women and men. It also means that we must try to remove from the educational system our assumptions derived from the male stereotype and life-plan and move towards a far greater flexibility, to suit a pluriformity of individuals, lifestyles, life-plans, ways of learning, step-outs and step-ins, as an alternative between learning, living and working.

11.2. A strategy for lifelong learning for women and men

It is now clear that measures which remain restricted to youth-education will not do. As a result of the differential development of women and men many of the educational needs of women are shifted to adult life. It is an open question if de-stereotyping of youth-education will make much difference or just a little on

this differential development (it depends on the explanatory model) but one can safely say that proportional differences will last for more than one generation, so let us adapt to it.

In doing so, we must be careful not to institutionalise again more-or-less separate systems for lifelong learning which can be associated with the male and female stereotypes. This refers to the "harder" forms of continuing education, which are mainly directed towards the (first) labour market and where the men are over-represented to a large degree, next to the "softer" forms of adult education which seem to be the women's destination.

We see this happening with concepts of recurrent education which are defined as an alternation between (paid) work and learning and the development of forms of educational leave, restricted to time off from paid employment : opportunities preponderantly for men, while adequate measures for the women who have taken the family responsibilities are forgotten.

There is a pitfall too in concepts of recurrent education which abandon the concurrent forms, which are far more accessible for people with double responsibilities - paid and unpaid. And the same applies to over-emphasis on full-time education as opposed to part-time education (most people who participate in the part-time forms do not do so because they are lazy, but because they have other equally important things to do).

There is a danger of re-training women for the second labour market, while we are re-training men for the first - counselling women for the typically female and underpaid jobs (and even, as it happens nowadays, for the unpaid jobs) while the men are counselled towards the better jobs of higher status. There is also a danger, finally, in the development of second chance education which is by its traditional birth-right more geared to the needs of men, next to forms of civic education, consciousness-raising, personality development, which are - for what human reason? - directed to women.

In search of a strategy for lifelong learning which at the same time can bridge the two worlds the concept of recurring education presents itself. We opt for this strategy because it tries to link working, learning and living into one integral strategy. This could be of great importance for abolishing the stereotyped domains of women's and men's activity.

The principle of recurrent education is characterised by a number of European concepts and possibilities of application according to a recent statement made by Kallen (1). It would be useful to examine which concept could be beneficial to the equal opportunities of women and girls and which conditions this would entail.

We assume that the basic principles of recurrent education are known : "the essence as a proposition .... is a redistribution of education over the lifespan of the individual in a recurring way .... It also implies the alternation of education with other activities, of which the principal would be work, but which might also include leisure and retirement" (2).

Our eyes are now sharpened to the probably unconscious conformity to the male stereotype in this definition. What is referred to here as "leisure" includes the world of unpaid labour and "non-work" which is traditionally the domain of women. We see once again that what is not counted is usually not noticed.

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(1) Kallen : "European concepts"

(2) Kallen & Bengtsson : "Recurrent education"

However, we should not judge the originators of the idea of recurrent education for not foreseeing the full consequences of their ideas for women. It is generally striking how thinking about female emancipation - and its evolution towards thinking about the position of men and women in society - has developed apart from other areas. Until very recently it has remained an alien element and its implications in other areas of social life have not been fully recognised.

Nevertheless, the concept of recurrent education does have a potential to do justice to women and girls by offering them opportunities for optimal development in different phases of life, along with the men who change to a different pattern of distributing their time. So if we opt for recurrent education it must be a concept such that it counteracts sex-stereotyping, integrates values that have been associated with the "female" part of life and has the means to close the gap between women and men. We cannot compile a complete list of necessary conditions at this point in time, but can suggest some key elements.

11.3. Breaking vicious circles

Vicious circles should be broken at several points : at the various levels of youth-education, in extending and shaping adult and continuing education, inside the system and - if possible - from outside.

Regarding youth education there are the following suggestions :

- Initial education should concentrate on opposing stereotyped treatment of boys and girls, refrain as much as possible from treating them as a group and avoid those aspects of school design which separate boys and girls to a greater extent than necessary.

- Learning materials and teaching aids should show varied patterns of behaviour for both sexes ; new curricula should be developed which meet these aims.

- Teachers have a key role in contesting stereotypes. Their basic training should contain knowledge of sex roles, and awareness of their far-reaching consequences in the later life of their pupils.

  This also applies to in-service training.

- Composition of the teaching staff and career-patterns of female and male teachers are important. Efforts should be made to distribute female teachers more evenly over the system. It is quite possible that many boys would benefit from the presence of male teachers in nursery and the lowest classes of primary schools, while girls would benefit from the presence of female teachers in higher classes and as head-teachers.

- Parents are also important in combatting sex-role stereotyping. They can be made conscious of the problem at parent-meetings, in general courses of adult education, or in information on vocational guidance.

- If vocational counselling is to be effective it must begin at an early stage and certainly before the first subject choices are made. Counsellors have a key role in reducing the influence of the sexual stereotypes and putting emphasis on the future occupational choice. They are in a position to convince girls that at most one-third of their adult life will be involved with bringing up young children and they should take account of this when planning their future lives. In more general terms girls need to be advised

that they are taking great risks when they leave education without vocational training and have children before getting work experience, which will be of importance in being able to negotiate a return to work after a period of not working.

- What applies to primary education is even more the case for secondary education. Our choice for a system of recurrent education is to express a preference for the comprehensive school as advantageous to women and girls. We cannot allow girls to make choices at the age of eleven which will restrict their freedom and possibilities to a great degree in later life.

- The compulsory subjects should offer women and girls real opportunities for further education and not only in the specific female occupations. Given the importance in our society of further education and vocational training basic subjects must include mathematics for both sexes. The girl who leaves secondary school should in general be qualified to restart her education at a later point or to follow a vocational training. This also applies, of course, to boys. The compulsory subjects for both sexes should be identical.

- To the degree that the basic subjects are intended to include skills needed to function in our society, they should include at least basic principles of looking after oneself, such as cooking, clothing and household maintenance, and child care.

With reference to adult and continuing education there are the following suggestions :

- Women have a new motivation to learn and to work, especially those who have been most subjected to the male stereotype, when the effects of early socialisation begin to lose their influence in adulthood. This can arise equally from an unexpected success in occupational life as through the reverses in real life, such as divorce or the unemployment of the man. It can also arise because the upbringing of children now takes less time and they begin to look for new tasks.

- Women will often have need of the same educational contents and levels as young people, but the educational methods will need to be adapted to adult learning processes. This applies equally to general and vocational education.

- The educational system will have to give credit for the time involved in bringing up children and looking after oneself and others. This time should not be defined as leisure, but has to be valued as a form of social experience. Access to education should take account of this form of experience, eg. in the form of maturity tests.

- Access to education must offer equal chances to those with responsibilities elsewhere and this entails courses which are divided in modules which do not take a whole day, a full week or a long consecutive period of attendance. The timing of educational supply during the daytime and the evenings is an important point and should be viewed in close association with the target groups for whom it is intended.

An active policy towards women is needed as a complement to these structural measures :

In general educational innovation must not be directed exclusively to women, however well intended. In our pluriform society there will always be a proportion of men who share the same position. The principle of open access is a necessary condition of equal opportunity. However, there is an important exception. A system of recurrent education which remains restricted to a formal definition of educational opportunity and unconcerned with which groups make use of it can only contribute to increasing the educational gap. Poeple have to learn, to experience the advantages of development in their personal lives in order to believe in education. This is less likely to be the case for those with the least education, or those who belong to a less valued social group. If recurrent education has pretensions to improve educational opportunities for everyone it cannot avoid an active policy for outreach and recruitment which will be directed towards specific target groups. Women are such a target group. In this context social and civic education, assertivity training, outreach work and counselling especially directed to women in a certain period, is important and acceptable. The same applies to a policy for special facilities for such groups. For instance, we regard the provision of playgroups to be not the exclusive responsibility of educational policy in the longer term. But if education is to really fulfil a role in promoting equal chances for women, such facilities must be available in a policy for outreach and recruitment.

A last remark. In the discussion about equal opportunities for women and girls frequent reference has been made to the fact that there are great differences between women as a group although all women are more or less handicapped by the stereotype. These differences are associated with other well-known factors in inequality such as the level of urbanisation, educational level of the parents, the social class of the parents and forms of inter-generational inequality. In this way forms of multiple disadvantage arise which indicate clear risk groups among women and girls, and will help by choosing priorities in educational policy.

12. IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY

12.1. The need for an active policy

What can governments do to solve these problems ? What are their responsibilities and those of others? Which priority instruments do they have at their disposal and where do the priorities lie ?

It has already been observed that emancipation policy is often an alien element amidst existing policies and that its implications for other areas of social life are inadequately recognised. One of the reasons for this is that the changing positions of men and women are too often seen in normative, "idealistic" terms. The question arises then as to the extent to which the government has a responsibility in changing such attitudes in society. This leads in our view to a completely unjustified statement of the problem. Fundamental changes in the relations between the sexes have taken place which are as much empirical as normative in origin. The stereotyped views of men and women display a relation between the facts and opinions which is no longer adequate in our day and age. And yet these stereotypes still determine the form and content of our educational system.

We must re-quote here John Stuart Mill, as Darling did in "Creating Choices for Women" :

> "Institutions, books, education, society, all go on training human beings for the old, long after the new has come ; much more when it is only coming. But the true virtue of human beings is fitness to live together as equals ; claiming for themselves nothing but what they as freely concede to anyone else".

We tried to show that the changing position of women is associated with deep-rooted cultural changes which are completely new in our Western societies. At the same time we are changing our views of the world of work, of paid and unpaid labour, of learning, and the place learning should have throughout life. Governments cannot take a position on the sidelines in a complex society such as our own. In 1976 the Scientific Council for Government Policy in the Netherlands produced a report which demonstrated that on the basis of present trends the position of women in the year 2000 would not improve but probably deteriorate should the absence of an active policy allow a number of conflicts to develop. Governments must anticipate, make timely corrections, solve problems when they arise. To be brief, they must pursue an active policy.

Governments have gradually become aware of the problem. The Mexico Conference in 1975 viewed the problem of women as a problem of society itself with some justification. It is important that governments should not regard the position of women primarily as a demand for new policy next to and in addition to existing policies. In fact it involves a new dimension to already existing policies, a re-orientation and re-allocation. It may be true, however, that the addition of new policy-principles and directives to existing policy requires time and energy of the educational and administrative system, and additional resources for the pursuit of a policy of innovation. But emancipation has reached such a stage now that no Minister of Education will have difficulty in finding a taskforce to provide expert advice. The Data Report shows that much has already been done at the national level. Exchange of research results and information about experiments could save national governments much time and effort. The net results of such a policy should not only be seen in terms of pure justice, but also in terms of preventing social conflict. It could give extra impulses to educational innovations which have been pleaded for during the last decade.

12.2. The legal framework : directives for policy

Sexual discrimination has been constitutionally forbidden in most European countries for many years. The implementation of civil rights on an individual basis is guaranteed to all their inhabitants. These rights are laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the European Convention on Human Rights.

We are here concerned with basic rights such as the right to education (1) and the right to work (1) and the consequential rights to vocational training (1), free occupational choice (1) and vocational counselling (1). Furthermore, there are the rights to social participation in terms of the exercise of political, cultural and social rights. These rights are almost always complemented by the fobidding of discrimination on the grounds of sex. Such treaties, conventions, agreements and laws must primarily be regarded as a duty for governments to guarantee such rights and pursue an active policy for their implementation. Together they offer the context for a set of measures which are general to Western European countries and offer a common basis for policy. Additionally, they offer in many cases a legal instrument in the hands of the individual citizen, but this depends upon the national laws and the question as to which parts of such treaties have to be considered as self-executing. It is not surprising, therefore, that in general we cannot speak of formal differences between men and women before the law. Some issues are open to question.

Whether the continued existence of separate schools for boys and girls is in conflict with the individual's rights to education and non-discrimination is an open question. Both of these concepts are combined in the principle of open access. The Data Report points out that segregation is not in the interests of the pupils and that in segregated educational systems there are qualitative differences which work to the disadvantage of the girls. The Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960 (1) admits segregation on one condition : "if these systems or institutions offer equivalent access to education, provide a teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard as well as school premises and equipment of the same quality, and afford the opportunity to take the same or equivalent courses of study". The large majority of separate schools for girls do not meet this condition. This is reason enough for the countries concerned to re-appraise their segregated educational systems.

Parents have the right to "ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions" (1). These convictions may include different views on the roles women and men are destined to play in this society. Does this mean that parents have rights which might run contrary to the obligations of the state to guarantee to every individual the right to education ? In our opinion there is no such conflict on the rather high level of abstraction where these rights are at the moment.

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(1) Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (Art. 26 : the right to education; Art. 2 : anti-discrimination)

European Convention on Human Rights 1950 (First protocol, art. 2 : the right to education; Art. 14 : anti-discrimination)

Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960 (Art. 1 : anti-discrimination; Art. 2 : segregation; Art. 5 : liberty of the parents)

European Social Charter 1961 (Art. 1 : right to work, vocational guidance, training and rehabilitation; Art. 9 : right to vocational guidance, with regard to the individuals characteristics; Art. 10 : right to vocational training, retraining, based solely on individual aptitude)

Convention on the Political Rights of Women 1953 (Art. I and II : anti-discrimination)

Similarly : EEC Resolutions 19 February 1976, 30 December 1976 etc.
UN International Conference on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966

See too : Draft Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Art. 2 and 3 (United Nations)

At the level of implementation the state has the duty to guarantee elementary education and - resulting from this duty - to secure the enjoyment of rights without discrimination on grounds such as sex and to ensure that the compulsory part of education - which in most countries exceeds elementary education - is equal for both sexes.

Parents choose "the kind of education", which means that there can be no disagreement about the compulsory elements of education. "These rights shall safeguard the legitimate convictions of parents within the system but shall not thwart the right to education of the children" according to Wildhaber, in his report for the Council of Europe (1). The child's right to education has an autonomous value.

It may be that in countries where the religious question is strongly felt the discussion starts from this point on. It will involve a weighing-up of the different rights on the highest political level.

However, where the state fulfils a stimulating, experimental and informational role, this is outside the area of possible conflict, and it is here where the first priorities in a policy for promoting equal opportunity for women and girls lie.

Finally a possibility of formal inequality remains when marital status or being a breadwinner (usually the man), has consequences in educational legislation. There is sometimes a discrimination against women students in this way in the allocation of student grants. Such examples of second-hand discrimination are also to be found in adult education. It is a fairly easy task for governments to remove the last vestiges of formal discrimination.

12.3 Equal opportunities : a legal obligation

Equality before the law is not an adequate guarantee of equality between people. Our idea of justice demands that people should be able to enjoy their rights.

Article 14 of the European Convention speaks of "the enjoyment of rights and freedoms", the Convention against Discrimination in Education speaks of "the duty ... to promote equality of opportunity ... and treatment for all in education". So a government which guarantees the right to education is also required to create the opportunities to enjoy the right in practice regardless of sex. In this way our thinking about equality has evolved from formal legislation towards the enjoyment of actual rights. The approach is not new to education at all. It established itself in the last century in the form of help for the poor, such as free education and study grants etc. In its attempts to allow everyone to develop according to his or her capacities educational policy has in the present century created more and more facilities and cleared away many barriers.

This legal viewpoint is also a basis for the ideal of positive discrimination which allows the government to provide preferential treatment for certain groups. Governments have the active duty to guarantee constitutional rights for everyone. When some groups are unable to exercise these rights the government is required to take measures to help them. Positive discrimination is a policy instrument which is legally permissible and sometimes even necessary. It is always a complementary measure which loses its basis in law when the object is achieved. It is by nature

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(1) Wildhaber : "To what extent has the right to education undergone an evolution?" Fourth Int. Colloquy Human Rights, Rome 1975.

a temporary measure. Many measures which governments employ to remove barriers for special groups belong to this category, for example, quotas, affirmative action and measurable objectives. These are measures which every government will employ only with much circumspection since they, at least temporarily, restrict the rights of other more advantaged groups of citizens. A good yardstick for the use of such measures is to be found in the recommendations and guidelines for action of the European Social Development Programme of the United Nations (1977) : "by raising, possibly temporarily, objectives to participation, always somewhat ahead of present levels on the basis that discrimination must always imply there are more individuals capable of office than the numbers presently participating in decisions. Governments and international bodies are ideally placed to take such a load".

We have made a distinction between educational policy and government policy in education because we think there are more parties concerned in educational policy. Parents, teachers, social and religious groups and their organisations, may feel that they have duties of their own to fulfil in the field of education. Every government is aware of this and tries to shape its policy together with these groups. However, education is a first responsibility of government and the government should take a lead in shaping its development. In the last chapters we have tried to give some idea of what a policy for equal opportunities for women and girls implies. It is all within the possibilities for a government to make a start with these suggestions : there are good policy reasons and a legal basis as well.

12.4. Conclusion

In the beginning we posed the question as to how far the latest developments in education and educational policy are in the interest of women. Our broad conclusion must be that in general they may be in their interests. The broadening of educational objectives, taking into consideration the whole lifecycle of the individual, the alternation between living, learning and working, and the development of the concept of recurrent education could give women the opportunities for development which were until recently not possible.

These developments may serve the interests of women, but they are not an adequate guarantee for the promotion of their equal opportunities in education. To achieve this it will be necessary to remove those assumptions from the educational system which manifest the male stereotype of the lifecycle, career, availability, productive phase, and learning needs. A reassessment of youth education will have to take place with the removal of the stereotypes. The declining birthrate may help us in the very necessary re-allocation of resources towards adult education.

Many of these developments will have a middle or long-term character while the problem of equal educational opportunities for women is today's contemporary problem. As has already happened for other disadvantaged groups, an active policy for promoting equal opportunities should be a first priority.

Governments should not shrink from this task because of the supposition that such a policy would double their problems in the labour market, education and society in general. In this manner they are thinking of the new in terms of "the old long after the new has come".

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